ered by their respective. State Plan Budgets. Now the per capita plan investment in the hill area sub-plan of Assam is 200 to 300 per cent less than that of other hill States of North East. The State of Sikkim with less than half the population and one-third of the area of Assam hill district receives a per capita plan investment which is double that of Assam hill areas. So also is the case with Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

This has led to extreme backwardness in terms of literacy rate, revenue generation, health care index, poverty and other vital aspects in the hill districts of Assam. Therefore, as the sole representative of the two hill districts of Assam, I urge upon the Government to change the policy of plan fund allocations immediately so as to bring the per capita plan investment in Assam hill area sub-plan at least at par with that of other hill States of North East. Thank you.

(viii) Need to fix blour price for pepper produced in Kerala at Rs. 6000/- quintal and other measures for the benefit of pepper cultivahior

SHRI PALA K.M. MATHEW (Idukki): The small pepper cultivators in the country are reeling under a terrible situation. India's production of pepper is mainly concentrated in Kerala. 98 per cent of the pepper is produced in the State. The price of pepper which was Rs. 6,000. per quintal three years back is now only Rs. 3,000. since last three years the cost of all inputs and services have more than trebled. In addition to this slump in price, vast areas of pepper cultivation have been totally devastated on an unprecedented scale by epidemic diseases. As a result the poor peasants are on the verge of total ruination.

Immediate steps should be taken to fix a floor price of Rs. 6,000 per quintal for pepper. Reasearch work should also be done for finding out and preventing this killing decease on a warfooting. Compensation for the losses already suffered, aids and assistance for replanting the ruined areas and rehabilitation of the thrown out peasants must be arranged without delay. A Pepper Corporation of India to look after all the interests of the cultivation and farmers must be set up immediately. I urge upon the Government to take these steps at the earliest.

13.24 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till twenty *five minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.*

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at twenty-eight minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

STATUTORY RESOLUTION *RE* APPROVAL OF PROCLAMATION IN RELATION TO THE STATE OF MEGHALAYA AND MOTION *RE* REVOCATION OF PROCLAMATION INRELATION TO THE STATE OF MEGHALAYA-*CONTD*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Purkayastha will continue.

14.28 hrs.

SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA (Silchar): Hon. Deputy-Speaker, Sir while I was discussing yesterday regarding Meghalaya, I mentioned that the Speaker of the House who is the philosopher, guide and custodian of the Assembly could solve the problem very easily. But without solving the problem he rather made it more difficult.

Sir, it is very unfortunate that the Speaker of the Meghalaya Assembly who belongs to the congress Party did it. It is also a fact that as soon the Speaker is elected, he becomes a non-party man and his activities are non-partisan and that is expected everywhere and that is done everywhere. But, Sir, in the